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WWF briefing for 21 October House of Commons debates on COP26 and limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees

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SUMMARY

- On Thursday 21 October 2021 the House of Commons will hold a Backbench Business debate on “COP26 and limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees”. There will also be a Westminster Hall debate on “UK’s climate progress: the Committee on Climate Change’s 2021 Progress Report” at 1.30pm. This briefing is for MPs participating in either or both of these debates.
- Current commitments from governments and businesses would see the world warm by more than 2 degrees, far past levels the science shows are safe for humanity and our planet. This isn’t acceptable. The difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees of warming – for people and for planet – is stark.
- **MPs should use the debates to raise the need for the Government to make clear commitments to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, provide exemplary and instructive leadership as COP26 hosts, and ensure nature is at the heart of commitments to limit warming.**

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK THE GOVERNMENT

- How does the government intend to reduce the UK’s global environmental footprint, and will they use the powers in the Environment Bill to set a target?
- Given the UK is off track to meet its carbon goals in almost every sector, will the Government commit to a Net Zero Test on all spending and taxation decisions in Budgets and Spending Reviews to ensure that the overall package puts us on track to meet our climate and nature goals?
- What will the UK do at COP26 to put land use, agriculture, and nature-based solutions at the forefront of efforts to tackle the climate crisis?

- Nature must be reflected in the formal outcomes coming out of COP26. What will the UK do to ensure that nature is firmly anchored in the formal text decisions adopted at COP26?
- How will the UK use the outcomes of the FACT dialogue to drive progress towards deforestation and conversion-free supply chains beyond COP26?

THE IMPORTANCE OF 1.5 DEGREES

- The world has warmed by around 1.1 degrees since pre-industrial times. At the Paris Agreement in 2015, world governments committed to allowing no more than 2 degrees of global warming, with a target of no more than 1.5 degrees.
- Yet [a recent report](#) by the IPCC, the key UN climate science body, found that temperatures are continuing to rise, and 1.5 degrees will likely be exceeded within the next 20 years unless governments take urgent action.
- Warming beyond 1.5 degrees would likely bring permanent harm. 1.5 degrees represents a tipping point: once we go past it, the repercussions for people and nature will be irreversibly damaging.
- Key species around the world and in Britain are threatened by a rise in temperatures. WWF's [Feeling the Heat](#) report found both flora and fauna are threatened by rising temperatures: mountain hares, bumblebees, and Atlantic puffins are already in decline owing to global heating, as are British bluebells and invaluable coral reefs.

THE GOVERNMENT MUST KEEP ITS CLIMATE PROMISES

- Delivery on the UK's climate promises is vital if the Government wishes to be a strong and credible leader ahead of COP26.
- This decade must be a decisive decade for tackling climate change before it is too late. The previous decade was the hottest ever recorded, and this warming was accompanied by dangerous weather and increased natural disasters. Flooding and fires this year alone highlight how little time we have left.
- We are not on track to meet 1.5 degrees. [A report by the Climate Change Committee \(CCC\)](#) found the UK was off track to meet its emissions targets in almost every sector. This must change, otherwise the world is likely to experience global warming of at least 1.5 degrees by the mid-2030s. Commitments and promises are important, but the time for implementation is now. The UK Government has promised to protect forests like the Amazon – an essential ally against climate breakdown. A [WWF report](#) shows that UK products are still fuelling fires and mass deforestation in places like the Amazon. As it stands, the Government's Environment Bill wouldn't stop legal deforestation in the Amazon being part of the supply chains for products that could be sold in the UK.
- World leaders – including the UK – have promised to help the finance sector get to net-zero: stopping our banks investing in dirty fossil fuels or the destruction of our forests. Yet a [report](#) by WWF and Greenpeace shows that emissions financed by UK banks and asset managers are currently responsible for nearly double the UK's annual carbon emissions.
- The Government has promised they will make sure nature is at the heart of actions to tackle the climate crisis, and at the heart of COP26. From more trees to healthy

oceans, wetland and peatlands, nature can help us tackle the climate crisis. But [WWF's NDCs report](#) shows that nature's potential for climate action isn't fully used in national climate plans around the world.

KEEPING 1.5 DEGREES ALIVE AT COP26

- The Government must foster momentum amongst other countries to commit to no more than 1.5 degrees and to ensure nature is at the heart of climate action.
- To ensure the countries most vulnerable to climate change are protected, the Government must help provide clarity on how developed countries will deliver on their commitment to scale up finance to US\$100 billion a year and beyond in the post-2020 period, and ensure the post-2025 finance goal negotiations starting at COP are concluded by 2023.
- The role of nature should be recognised in COP26 decisions. The Government should seek to recognise the crucial role played by nature for climate change mitigation and adaptation by anchoring nature in the formal COP26 text outcomes, and increase funding for nature-based solutions.
- We must see the Government commit to and urge others to commit to accelerating decarbonisation and shifting away from our dependence on fossil fuels. The world must at least halve global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and be net-zero by 2050, while nature loss must be halted and reversed.

GREENING OUR FINANCE SECTOR

- We must harness the power of both public and private finance, as well as shifting the international financial system away from destructive practices if we are to limit warming to no more than 1.5 degrees.
- We strongly welcome the recent announcement by the Government to make it a requirement for companies to disclose net zero transition plans.
- Net-zero transition plans are critical to reaching net zero and can help unleash the investment we need to get on track.
- As WWF called for in our recent letter to the Chancellor, we would like him to confirm by COP26 that it will be mandatory for all companies to publish these plans and they will need to be aligned with the 1.5 degree target.
- We need to see a clear timeframe set for mandatory implementation by all large firms by 2023 at the very latest.

A NET ZERO TEST

- The Government should apply a Net Zero Test to all spending and taxation decisions in Budgets and Spending Reviews to ensure that the overall package puts us on track to meet our climate and nature goals.
- Introducing a Net Zero Test can help government to target investment towards green infrastructure, unleashing a wave of green private sector spending and unlocking £90 billion of annual benefits, including green jobs and export opportunities, warmer homes, and more green space for everyone.
- By getting the UK's spending on track to net-zero, the country will set a leading example at COP26 and can encourage other states to implement similar policies.

ALIGNING UK AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE WITH NETZERO

- Emissions from land-use represent 12% of the UK's emissions. Deep emission cuts are needed – the UK must cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2030, and transition UK land to a net carbon sink by 2040 at the latest, by on farm actions and protecting and restoring peatlands, woodland, saltmarshes and other nature-rich habitats.
- The UK Government must support farmers and landowners to cut emissions and shift towards regenerative farming, give people a meaningful voice in deciding the future of their landscapes, and put in place clear baselines and metrics.
- The UK is also responsible for emissions abroad. As such we must end deforestation, and tackle the overseas impacts of the UK food system. Setting in place legislation to remove deforestation and land conversion from food supply chains, tackle the impacts of producing animal feed and drive core environmental standards in trade deals is crucial in protecting nature across the world and truly committing to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MEASURES TO LIMIT WARMING AT ALL TIME HIGH

- **A new report** from WWF and Demos shows the public are united on how to meet the UK's 2030 climate goals.
- The largest ever analysis of the public's climate policy preferences found the most popular climate policies among the public would go even further than the UK's 2030 emissions targets while avoiding hitting the lowest-income families.
- 91% of people want to ensure a comprehensive UK-wide electric car and van charging network is in place by 2028.
- 77% want to see a much more ambitious approach for low carbon heating in homes, such as active government-led schemes to expand the installation of heat pumps and insulation, backed by grants covering the full cost for low-income households, as well as low-interest loans, helping create UK jobs.
- If the UK Government enacted these policies, the UK's emissions in 2030 could be reduced by 42% compared to 2019, taking the UK well on the road to limiting warming to 1.5.
- Almost 25,000 constituents have recently emailed their MP to ask them to act on climate change, because they know Government climate promises must be kept. The time for action is now.

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